

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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R 211732Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO DEPARTMENT TRANSPORTATION
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 6966
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL HAMBURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EWWT, GW, UR
SUBJECT: FRG TRANSPORT MINISTRY OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON
SOVIET SHIPPING

REF: (A) BONN 3590, (B) BONN 3020, (C) USMISSION NATO
12872 (1977), (D) BONN A-309 (1977)

1. DURING MARCH 18 MEETING AT BONN/COLOGNE AIRPORT
BETWEEN DOT DEPUTY SECRETARY BUTCHMAN AND HEINZ RUHNAU,
FRG TRANSPORT MINISTRY STATE SECRETARY, RUHNAU
DESCRIBED SOVIET FLEET ACTIVITY AS A SENSITIVE PROBLEM
AND ONE COMMERCIALY AND POLITICALLY DANGEROUS TO THE
WEST. HE SUGGESTED THAT FRG TRANSPORT MINISTER
GSCHIEDLE AND DOT SECRETARY ADAMS DISCUSS THE ISSUE
DURING GSCHIEDLE'S JULY TRIP TO THE U.S.

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2. RUHNAU SAID THAT SOVIET FLEET INCURSIONS INTO
WESTERN SHIPPING HAD TWO GOALS:

- (A) A COMMERCIAL GOAL TO EARN HARD CURRENCY, AND
- (B) A STRATEGIC GOAL TO INCREASE USSR CARGO
CARRYING CAPACITY AND TO UNDERCUT WESTERN

SHIPPING.

RUHNAU SAW THE LATTER GOAL AS MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE WEST THAN THE FORMER. HE CLAIMED THAT 30 PERCENT OF ALL CONTAINERS FROM HAMBURG AND BREMEN TO NORTH AMERICA ARE NOW BEING CARRIED BY SOVIET AND POLISH VESSELS. HE NOTED THAT DURING A TENSE EAST/WEST SITUATION, A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF GOODS NEEDED BY THE ALLIES IN EUROPE WOULD COME VIA CONTAINERS AND THAT IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO HAVE NATO FIT THIS 30 PERCENT INTO ITS TRANSPORT PLANNING. RUHNAU SAID THAT THE SOVIETS NOW HAVE THE CARGO CAPACITY TO CARRY ALL OF EUROPE'S INBOUND FREIGHT.

3. THE FRG STATE SECRETARY POINTED OUT THAT SOVIET STRATEGIC INTERESTS INVOLVED EAST AFRICA AND THE HORN AND NOTED THAT USSR SHIPMENTS TO THESE AREAS HAVE INCREASED. HE SAID THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE WEEKLY DEPARTURES TO EAST AFRICA, WHICH ARE COMMERCIALY UNSOUND, SINCE THE HOLDS ARE OFTEN LESS THAN HALF FULL; THE VESSELS, HOWEVER, CAN ALSO CARRY ARMS.

4. RUHNAU NOTED THAT ALL THE WEST EUROPEANS HAVE DIFFICULTIES WITH MOSCOW OVER THIS PROBLEM. HE SAID THE EC INTENDS TO ACT ON THIS ISSUE BY FORMULATING A COMMON PROGRAM AGAINST THE USSR.

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5. THE STATE SECRETARY SAID THE FRG WAS CONVINCED THAT ON A BILATERAL BASIS, BONN HAD TO DEAL VIGOROUSLY WITH THE USSR ON THIS ISSUE. THE GERMAN CABINET PASSED A "TOUGH" LAW (SEE REFTTEL A, PARA 3 AND REFTTEL B, PARA 3) WHICH GOT MOSCOW'S ATTENTION AND, AS RUHNAU DESCRIBED IT, HAD THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BONN CALLING ON HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE RUHNAU ASSUMED OFFICE IN 1974. RUHNAU STATED THAT THE LAW HAD MADE THE SOVIETS INTERESTED IN DISCUSSING THE ISSUE AND IN CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS IN SEPTEMBER IN MOSCOW.
STOESSEL

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